



STEVE COOLEY  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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May 16, 2008

Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**FY 2008-09 DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
CRITICAL UNMET NEEDS**

As a result of projected revenue losses, virtually all levels of County government have been asked to reduce costs by meeting budget targets and assigned curtailments. In my Department, this situation has resulted in reductions in attorney staff, significant reductions in services and supplies and unfunded programs that provide essential services.

I have therefore only identified those areas that I believe are of the utmost importance to the District Attorney's Office in fulfilling its mission on behalf of the people we serve. They address a variety of issues from curtailments to existing unfunded programs. My number one priority is restoration of the curtailment of deputy district attorneys.

**RESTORATION OF ATTORNEY CURTAILMENT**

In order to meet the mandated target curtailment imposed by the Chief Executive Office, my Department was forced to make the difficult decision to reduce attorney staff by 17 deputy district attorney positions. Given the significant reductions already sustained in services and supplies as a result of increased costs, CEO imposed targets, and unfunded increases passed on to my department from other central service departments, reducing attorney staff was the only option available to achieve the required reductions.

This curtailment impacts my general prosecution operations, which handles a myriad of cases including felonies and misdemeanors that are prosecuted in the communities they serve. Implementation of this curtailment will make it extremely difficult for my office to meet its obligation of staffing courtrooms in the Department's 27 central, branch and area offices, as well as 10 juvenile offices throughout the County. Furthermore,

reduced staff levels will increase the number of cases each deputy is assigned which in turn extends the life of the case and impedes the Department's ability to seek and secure swift justice. Given law enforcement's focused efforts on combating crime in targeted communities, a reduction in prosecution staff will make it difficult for my office to proceed quickly on the resultant cases. I am therefore requesting your Board's consideration of an exemption of my Department from the mandated target and restoration of the 17 prosecutor positions cut from my budget.

### **METROPOLITAN COURT STAFFING**

My Department is required to provide appropriate staffing in each of the Los Angeles County criminal and juvenile courts. In October 2007, my Office was notified that a new courtroom would be opening in the Metropolitan Court to handle the increased number of misdemeanor cases from the Florence/Firestone area. We were forced to redirect existing staff to cover this new courtroom which has proven to be a hardship on my other operations. We included a request for three positions in our FY 2008-09 Official Budget Request in order to provide the required courtroom coverage but no additional resources were recommended. I am requesting budget recognition for three positions to staff this new courtroom.

### **JOIN**

The Juvenile Offender Intervention Network (JOIN) targets non-violent, first-time youth offenders for diversion from the formal juvenile justice system into a program that provides swift intervention and accountability without encumbering juvenile court resources. This program has a proven track record of success and cost effectiveness. Approximately 82 percent of the graduates of the program remain arrest free up to three years after completing JOIN, and the cost avoidance to the criminal justice system is estimated to reach \$7 million this fiscal year.

This highly successful, award-winning program is currently staffed with ten Hearing Officers, one per District Attorney juvenile office. Justice Assistance Grant funds pay for three of the ten positions; however, the remaining seven positions for this important diversion program remain unfunded. I am again requesting budget recognition for seven unfunded Hearing Officers.



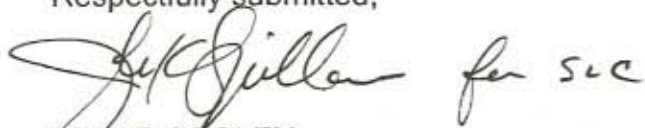
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## SUMMARY

The District Attorney's Office is committed to prudent business and fiscal management. We are constantly reviewing our operations and implementing cost saving measures where appropriate. My Office works diligently to explore all avenues of potential revenue and to maximize current revenues to the extent possible. We work collaboratively with the other criminal justice agencies, sharing best practices and technology resulting in savings to the County.

As an elected official, I have a responsibility to my constituency to provide the best possible prosecution and investigation services to the residents of Los Angeles County. I believe that we have provided more than sufficient justification to support our requests to restore our prosecution curtailment and fund two very important unmet needs. I am asking that your Board support my Office's effort by approving these requests.

Respectfully submitted,

  
STEVE COOLEY  
District Attorney

lv:cc

c: Chief Executive Officer